



Virus fears trigger more holiday cancellations, restrictions

By PHILIP MARCELO and JILL LAWLESS

BOSTON (AP) — The nation's second-largest city called off its New Year's Eve celebration Monday, and its smallest state reimposed an indoor mask mandate as fears of a potentially devastating winter COVID-19 surge triggered more cancellations and restrictions ahead of the holidays.

Organizers of the New Year's Eve party planned for downtown Los Angeles' Grand Park say there will not be an in-person audience. The event will be livestreamed instead, as it was last year. In Rhode Island, a mask mandate took effect Monday for indoor spaces that can hold 250 people or more, such

as larger retail stores and churches.

And in Boston, the city's new Democratic mayor announced to howls of protests and jeers that anyone entering a restaurant, bar or other indoor business will need to show proof of vaccination starting next month.

"There is nothing more American than coming together to ensure that we're taking care of each other," Mayor Michelle Wu said at City Hall as protesters loudly blew whistles and shouted "Shame on Wu."

Across the Atlantic, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson on Monday said officials have decided against imposing further restrictions, at least for now.

Continued on next page



People wait in a long line to get tested for COVID-19 in Times Square, New York, Monday, Dec. 20, 2021.

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Continued from Front

"We will have to reserve the possibility of taking further action to protect the public," Johnson said. "The arguments either way are very, very finely balanced." The conservative government re-imposed face masks in shops and ordered people to show proof of vaccination at nightclubs and other crowded venues earlier this month. It is also weighing curfews and stricter social distancing requirements.

Johnson's warning threw into stark relief the unpalatable choice government leaders face: wreck holiday plans for millions for a second consecutive year, or face a potential tidal wave of cases and disruption.

In the U.S., President Joe Biden is set to address the nation on the latest vari-



People walk down a normally bustling shopping street in the center of Amsterdam, Monday, Dec. 20, 2021.

Associated Press

ant on Tuesday, less than a year after he suggested that the country would essentially be back to normal by Christmas.

His top medical adviser, Dr. Anthony Fauci, made the rounds on television over the weekend, promising

that the Democrat will issue "a stark warning of what the winter will look like" for unvaccinated Americans. Cases are surging in parts of the U.S., particularly the Northeast and Midwest, though it's not always clear which variant is driving the

upswing.

In New York City, where the mayor has said the new variant is already in "full force," a spike is scuttling Broadway shows and spurring long lines at testing centers, but so far new hospitalizations and deaths are averaging well below their spring 2020 peak.

The city is also weighing what to do with its famous New Year's Eve bash in Times Square. Mayor Bill de Blasio has said a decision will be made this week about whether the event will come back "full strength" — with attendees providing proof of vaccination — as he promised in November. Last year's bash was limited to small groups of essential workers.

Much about the omicron coronavirus variant remains unknown, including whether it causes more or less severe illness. Scientists say omicron spreads even easier than other coronavirus strains, including delta, and it is expected to become dominant in the U.S. by early next year. Early studies suggest the vaccinated will need a booster shot for the best chance at preventing an omicron infection but even without the extra dose, vaccination still should offer strong protection against severe illness and death.

Even if it is milder, the new variant could still overwhelm health systems because of the sheer number of infections. Confirmed coronavirus cases in the U.K. have surged by 60% in a week as omicron overtook delta as the dominant variant.

But many political leaders are reluctant to impose the stiff measures they resorted to earlier in the pandemic — often because they promised their people that vaccines would offer a way out of such restrictions, and it may be politically

untenable to impose them again.

France, for example, is desperately trying to avoid a new lockdown that would hurt the economy and cloud President Emmanuel Macron's expected re-election campaign.

In Britain, the government hopes vaccine boosters will offer more protection against omicron, as the data suggests, and has set a goal of offering everyone 18 and up an extra shot by the end of December. More than 900,000 booster shots were delivered on Sunday, as soccer stadiums, shopping centers and cathedrals were turned into temporary inoculation clinics.

U.S. vaccine maker Moderna said Monday that lab tests suggested that a booster dose of its vaccine should offer protection against omicron. Similar testing by Pfizer also found that a booster triggered a big jump in omicron-fighting antibodies.

But many scientists say boosters along are not enough and tougher action is needed.

The speed of omicron's spread in the U.K., where cases of the variant are doubling about every two days, is decimating the economy in the busy pre-Christmas period.

Usually teeming theaters and restaurants are being hit by cancellations. Some eateries and pubs have closed until after the holidays because so many staff are off sick or self-isolating. The Natural History Museum, one of London's leading attractions, said Monday that it was closing for a week because of staff shortages. Other countries are warily watching the U.K., which reported 91,743 more lab-confirmed COVID-19 cases on Monday, close to the record high for a single day set last week. □

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Pentagon issues rules aimed at stopping rise of extremism

WASHINGTON (AP) — Warning that extremism in the ranks is increasing, Pentagon officials are issuing detailed new rules prohibiting service members from actively engaging in extremist activities. The new guidelines come nearly a year after some current and former service members participated in the riot at the U.S. Capitol, triggering a broad department review.

Senior defense officials tell The Associated Press that fewer than 100 military members are known to have been involved in substantiated cases of extremist activity in the past year, but they warn that the number may grow given recent spikes in domestic violent extremism, particularly among veterans.

Officials said the new policy doesn't largely change what is prohibited, but is more of an effort to make sure troops are clear on what they can and can't do, while still protecting their First Amendment free speech rights. And for the first time, it is far more specific about social media.

The new policy lays out in detail the banned activities, which range from advocating terrorism or supporting the overthrow of the government to fundraising or rallying on behalf of an extremist group or "liking" or reposting extremist views on social media. The rules also specify that commanders must determine two things in order for someone to be held accountable: that the action was an extremist activity, as defined in the rules, and that the service member "actively participated" in that prohibited activity.

Previous policies banned extremist activities but didn't go into such great detail, and also did not specify the two step process to determine someone accountable.

What was wrong yesterday is still wrong today, said one senior defense official. But several officials said that as a study group spoke with service members this year they found that many



Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin speaks during a media briefing at the Pentagon, Nov. 17, 2021, in Washington.

Associated Press

wanted clearer definitions of what was not allowed. The officials spoke about the new rules on condition of anonymity because they have not yet been made public.

The military has long been aware of small numbers of white supremacists and other extremists among the troops. But Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and other leaders launched a broader campaign to root out extremism in the force after it became clear that military veterans and some current service members were present at the Jan. 6 insurrection.

In a message to the force on Monday, Austin said the department believes that only a few service members violate their oath and participate in extremist activities. But, he added, "even the actions of a few can have an outsized impact on unit cohesion, morale and readiness - and the physical harm some of these activities can engender can undermine the safety of our people."

The risk of extremism in the military can be more dangerous because many service members have access to classified information about sensitive military operations or other national security information that could help adversaries. And extremist groups rou-

tinely recruit former and current service members because of their familiarity with weapons and combat tactics.

Officials said that while the substantiated cases may be small, compared to the size of the military, which includes more than 2 million active duty and re-

serve troops. The number appears to be an increase over previous years where the totals were in the low two-digits. But they also noted that data has not been consistent so it is difficult to identify trends.

The new rules do not provide a list of extremist organizations. Instead, it is up to

commanders to determine if a service member is actively conducting extremist activities based on the definitions, rather than on a list of groups that may be constantly changing, officials said.

Asked whether troops can simply be members of an extremist organization, officials said the rules effectively prohibit membership in any meaningful way — such as the payment of dues or other actions that could be considered "active participation."

The regulations lay out six broad groups of extremist activities, and then provide 14 different definitions that constitute active participation.

Soon after taking office, Austin ordered military leaders to schedule a so-called "stand-down" day and spend time talking to their troops about extremism in the ranks.

The new rules apply to all of the military services, including the Coast Guard, which in peacetime is part of the Department of Homeland Security. □

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Church agency: Captive missionaries made daring escape

By **PETER SMITH**

Associated Press

Berlin, OH (AP) — Captive missionaries in Haiti found freedom last week by making a daring overnight escape, eluding their kidnappers and walking for miles over difficult, moonlit terrain with an infant and other children in tow, according to the agency they work for, officials said Monday.

The group of 12 navigated by stars to reach safety after a two-month kidnapping ordeal, officials with the Christian Aid Ministries, the Ohio-based agency that the captive missionaries work for, said Monday at a press conference.

The detailed accounting of their journey to safety comes after news Thursday that the missionaries were free.

A total of 17 people from the missionary group — 12 adults and five minors — were abducted Oct. 16 shortly after visiting an orphanage in Ganthier, in the Croix-des-Bouquets area, where they verified it had received aid from CAM and played with the children, CAM has said. The group included 16 Americans and one Canadian. Their captors from the 400 Mawozo gang initially demanded millions of dollars in ransom. Five other captives had earlier reached



Christian Aid Ministries Weston Showalter gives details on the hostages experiences in Haiti during a news conference at the Christian Aid Ministries home office in Berlin, Ohio Monday, Dec. 20, 2021.

Associated Press

freedom. It is still unclear if any ransom was paid. CAM General Director David Troyer did say supporters of CAM raised funds for possible use for a ransom, but he refused to say whether one was paid for any of the releases. The 12 who fled last week carried the infant and 3-year-old, wrapping the baby to protect her from the briars and brambles, said CAM spokesman Weston Showalter. "After a number of hours of walking, day began to

dawn and they eventually found someone who helped to make a phone call for help," he said, his voice beginning to choke. "They were finally free." The 12 were flown to Florida on a U.S. Coast Guard flight, and later reunited with five hostages who were released earlier. CAM displayed photos at the news conferences showing the freed hostages being reunited, along with a video of the group singing a song that had inspired them during their

captivity. The missionaries were taken hostage on their way back from the orphanage on the afternoon of Oct. 16. "They had no idea what was ahead of them," Showalter said. Only five or 10 minutes after getting underway, they saw a roadblock up ahead. The group's driver — the one Canadian in the group — turned around, but a pickup truck pursued them, and "gang members surrounded the van," CAM spokesman Weston Showalter said. He said early re-

ports that the driver was a Haitian national were not accurate.

He said they were initially crowded into a small room in a house, but were moved around several times during their captivity.

They were not physically harmed by the kidnappers, Showalter said. He said the main physical challenges included the heat, mosquitoes and contaminated water for bathing, which led some of them to develop sores. Sometimes the young children got sick. However, he said everyone appears to have emerged from captivity in good health.

The adults received small food portions, such as rice and beans for dinner, although the captors provided plenty of food suitable for the small children, he said.

The hostages gathered multiple times during the day for prayer and religious devotions, and sometimes singing loud enough for each other to hear when they were in separate rooms, Showalter said.

They also sought to encourage other hostages who were being held for ransom in separate kidnappings, Showalter said.

Over time, the hostages agreed to try to escape, and chose the night of Dec. 15 to flee. □



Terry Farish, who published a children's book that she co-authored with a refugee from Africa, is seen in this Thursday, Sept. 16, 2021, photo, at River Run Bookstore, in Portsmouth, N.H.

Associated Press

KITTERY, Maine (AP) — An African refugee collaborated on a children's book that draws from his experience growing up in Maine's largest city.

Terry Farish, of Kittery, wrote the book with OD Bonny, who provided the inspiration for "A Feast for Joseph." It tells the story of a young refugee who adapts to a

African refugee who grew up in Maine inspires youth book

new life in Portland. Despite finding a better life, Joseph still longs for the family and friends — and food — he left behind at a refugee camp. "He still has good friends there, so he's missing all the people, how they used to cook and the music, and that's what he's homesick for," Farish told WMTW-TV. In the book, Joseph makes a friend and they cook an African feast that brings together the community. "I think friendship is one of the most important things to come from this book, but personally, for me my

favorite is tradition and the food," said Bonny, whose family fled South Sudan. The family ended up at Kyangwali Refugee Settlement in Uganda before coming to Maine. Bonny has since moved to Nebraska. After the two met in 2013, Bonny performed a rap he'd created about a young-adult novel Farish wrote about a Sudanese immigrant who settled in Maine, she told Seacoastonline.com. The new book is aimed at elementary school-aged children. It was published

in September by Toronto-based Groundwood Books. It was illustrated by Canadian Ken Daley, himself the son of immigrants, who said the story about being homesick and the connection to culture and food resonated with him, as well. "My parents emigrated from Dominica to Canada, so yes I drew on my family experience to help illustrate the story," he told The Associated Press. Maine is the nation's whitest state, but it's home to a growing population of immigrants and refugees from Africa. □

Prosecutors begin explaining indictment at MH17 trial

By MIKE CORDER

THE HAGUE, Netherlands, Netherlands (AP) —

Prosecutors on Monday began explaining evidence and their indictment to judges in the murder trial of three Russians and a Ukrainian charged with involvement in downing Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 over eastern Ukraine in 2014, killing all 298 passengers and crew. Prosecutors are scheduled to take three days to walk judges through the indictment at hearings in a top-security courtroom on the outskirts of Schiphol Airport — the departure point for the Boeing 777, which was heading for Kuala Lumpur when — according to prosecutors and international investigators — it was shot down.

"Today we are here to do right by the 298 victims of flight MH17," public prosecutor Thijs Berger told the court.

Monday's hearing began against a backdrop of soaring tensions between Moscow and the West over a Russian troop build-up near Ukraine that has drawn fears of an invasion.



Presiding judge Hendrik Steenhuis, center, during the ongoing trial and criminal proceedings regarding the downing of Malaysia Airlines flight MH17, at the high security court at Schiphol airport, near Amsterdam, Netherlands, Monday Dec. 20, 2021.

Moscow has denied plans to attack its neighbor, but demanded the West provide a set of legal guarantees precluding the expansion of NATO to Ukraine and other Russian neighbors and the deployment of the alliance's weapons there, a demand NATO has rejected.

"Determining the truth in this case may also contribute to averting new violence in the future," Berger told the judges.

"After all, a world that makes no effort to ascertain the truth and to punish the guilty when hundreds of innocent civilians are murdered is leaving its civilians

as fair game," he added. "And for that reason truth and lies need to be distinguished and perpetrators need to be punished. That is our task in this courtroom." Piet Ploeg, who lost his brother, sister-in-law, and nephew when MH17 was downed, was at the court for the hearing.

"We get to hear the conclusions of the prosecution, and on Wednesday we will hear the sentencing demands of the prosecution. So this ... for us, it's very important," he said.

None of the four suspects has appeared at the trial. Only one, Oleg Pulatov, has Dutch lawyers representing him in court. They say that he denies involvement. Pulatov is one of three Russian suspects together with Igor Girkin, and Sergey Dubinskiy. They are charged together with Ukrainian Leonid Kharchenko.

The trial began in March last year with the solemn reading of the names of all the people who died when the plane shattered in midair and plunged to the ground in agricultural fields in conflict-torn eastern Ukraine.

An international investigation into the crash concluded that MH17 was brought down by a buk missile that was trucked into Ukraine from a Russian military base. Investigators say the missile launcher then returned to Russia. Moscow denies involvement. □

Associated Press

U.N. chief calls for impartial probe into Beirut Port blast

BEIRUT (AP) — The U.N. chief called on Monday for an impartial and transparent investigation into last year's massive Beirut port explosion to ensure justice, after paying tribute to the victims of the blast.

The Aug. 4, 2020 blast has been described as one of the largest non-nuclear explosions in the world. It devastated the Lebanese capital, killing at least 216 people and injuring thousands.

Standing under the rain, United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, who is visiting Lebanon, laid a wreath at a memorial bearing the names of the victims at the Beirut Port site of the explosion.

The blast was caused by the detonation of hundreds of tons of ammonium nitrate stored in a warehouse at the port for years, appar-

ently with the knowledge of senior politicians and security officials who did nothing about it.

More than 16 months after the government launched a judicial investigation, nearly everything else remains unknown — from who ordered the shipment to why officials ignored repeated warnings of the danger. Families of the victims have been pressing for answers, accusing political parties of obstructing the national investigation.

Later Monday, Guterres tweeted, urging for an impartial and transparent investigation: "The Lebanese people deserve the truth." And after meeting with Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati, he reiterated his support for the families' quest for justice.

"I have been receiving messages from many vic-

tims claiming for the need of truth to be established, for the need of an independent investigation that is able to produce the truth," he said. "I fully understand their concerns and I hope that the institutions will be able to guarantee that." The local probe, led by Judge Tarek Bitar, has been facing numerous challenges, including criticism by powerful politicians and lawsuits from defendants who have questioned its fairness.

Disagreements over the judge's work have paralyzed the government, which has not met since Oct. 12 despite the country's huge economic, financial and political problems. Lebanon's powerful militant group Hezbollah and two allied groups have demanded that Bitar be replaced.



United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres lays a wreath at Martyrs' statue at the damaged site of the massive Aug. 4 explosion that hit the seaport last year, in Beirut, Lebanon, Monday, Dec. 20, 2021.

Associated Press

Guterres urged Lebanon's political leaders to come together to overcome the country's multiple crises, particularly the economic meltdown that has sank the once middle-income nation into poverty.

The U.N. chief arrived in

Lebanon on Sunday for a three-day visit. He said he is here to express solidarity with the Lebanese people and urged the international community to offer more financial assistance to the country in need of humanitarian assistance. □

375 dead, 56 missing after typhoon slams Philippines

By JIM GOMEZ

MANILA, Philippines (AP)

— The death toll from the strongest typhoon to batter the Philippines this year climbed to 375, with more than 50 others still missing and several central provinces struggling with downed communications and power outages and pleading for food and water, officials said Monday.

At its strongest, Typhoon Rai packed sustained winds of 195 kilometers (121 miles) per hour with gusts of up to 270 kph (168 mph) before blowing out into the South China Sea on Friday.

At least 375 people were killed, 56 were missing and 500 were injured, according to the national police. The toll may still increase because several towns and villages remained out of reach due to downed communications and power outages, although massive cleanup and repair efforts were underway.

Many were killed by falling trees and collapsing walls, flash floods and landslides. A 57-year-old man was found dead hanging from a tree branch and a woman was blown away and died in Negros Occidental province, police said.



In this photo provided by Greenpeace, cars pass by a toppled electrical post due to Typhoon Rai in Surigao city, Surigao del Norte, southern Philippines as power supply remain down on Sunday Dec. 19, 2021.

Associated Press

Governor Arlene Bag-ao of Dinagat Islands, among the southeastern provinces first hit by the typhoon, said Rai's ferocity on her island province of more than 130,000 people was worse than that of Typhoon Haiyan, one of the most powerful and deadliest typhoons on record which devastated the central Philippines in November

2013 but did not inflict any casualties in Dinagat.

"If it was like being in a washing machine before, this time there was like a huge monster that smashed itself everywhere, grabbed anything like trees and tin roofs and then hurled them everywhere," Bag-ao said by telephone. "The wind was swirling north to south to east and west repeatedly

for six hours. Some tin roof sheets were blown away and then were tossed back."

At least 14 villagers died and more than 100 others were injured by flying roofs, debris and glass shards and were treated in makeshift surgery rooms in damaged hospitals in Dinagat, Bag-ao said. Many more would have died if thousands of

residents had not been evacuated from high-risk villages.

Dinagat and several other typhoon-hit provinces remained without electricity and communications and many residents needed construction materials, food and water. Bag-ao and other provincial officials traveled to nearby regions that had cellphone signals to seek aid and coordinate recovery efforts with the national government.

More than 700,000 people were lashed by the typhoon in central island provinces, including more than 400,000 who had to be moved to emergency shelters. Thousands of residents were rescued from flooded villages, including in Loboc town in hard-hit Bohol province, where residents were trapped on roofs and in trees where they went to escape the rising floodwaters.

Coast guard ships ferried 29 American, British, Canadian, Swiss, Russian, Chinese and other tourists who were stranded on Siargao Island, a popular surfing destination that was devastated by the typhoon, officials said. □

U.K. court recognizes Guaidó but Venezuela gold case rolls on



Opposition leaders Juan Guaido, center left, and Freddy Superlano, greet supporters during a demonstration in support of Superlano, in Barinas, Venezuela, Saturday, Dec. 4, 2021.

Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — The U.K. Supreme Court ruled Monday that Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Guaidó should be recognized as the nation's interim president in a case that will ultimately determine who

controls almost \$2 billion of gold held by the Bank of England.

A five-judge panel unanimously agreed that British courts must honor the U.K. government's 2019 decision to recognize Guaidó

as interim president. The question is central to the case because Guaidó and President Nicolás Maduro have named separate boards to oversee Venezuela's central bank and both have laid claim to the gold.

But the case isn't over. The Supreme Court sent it back to a lower court to decide whether the Guaidó board has any legal standing after Venezuela's Supreme Tribunal of Justice declared Guaidó's appointments unconstitutional.

Guaidó said he welcomed the ruling and looked forward to demonstrating why the U.K. courts shouldn't recognize the decisions of the Supreme Tribunal.

"When we so demonstrate, the ... board appointed by President Guaidó will assume control of the reserves

and protect them from the depredations of the usurper Maduro regime," he said in a statement.

Guaidó, then leader of Venezuela's National Assembly, challenged Maduro's claim to the presidency, arguing that his 2018 election was rigged and invalid. Guaidó says he's the country's interim president under provisions of the constitution that allow the head of the legislature to take power until free elections can be held.

While a number of countries, including the U.S. and U.K., have recognized Guaidó's claim, he has never been able to assert his authority and Maduro remains in charge.

Attorneys for the Maduro Board said it remains the only "validly appointed

authority" to oversee the central bank's foreign assets and that ignoring the rulings of the Venezuelan courts would "fly in the face of the rule of law."

They criticized the Guaidó camp for drawing out the litigation for 19 months, leaving the central bank's assets frozen and unavailable for use for helping people in Venezuela suffering through the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Mr. Guaidó's recognition flies in the face of the reality on the ground," said Sarosh Zaiwalla, a senior partner at Zaiwalla & Co., representing the Maduro board. "His appointees have no ability to act on behalf of the (bank) in any effective way, or to represent it in any international legal proceedings." □

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Leftist millennial vows to remake Chile after historic win

SANTIAGO, Chile (AP) — Former leftist student leader Gabriel Boric will be under quick pressure from his youthful supporters to fulfill his promises to remake Chile after the millennial politician scored a historic victory in the country's presidential runoff election.

Boric spent months traversing Chile, vowing to bring a youth-led inclusive government to attack nagging poverty and inequality that he said are the unacceptable underbelly of a free market model imposed decades ago by the dictatorship of Gen. Augusto Pinochet.

The bold promise paid off. With 56% of the votes, Boric on Sunday handily defeated his opponent, far right lawmaker José Antonio Kast, and at age 35 was elected Chile's youngest modern president.

Amid a crush of supporters in downtown Santiago, Boric vaulted atop a metal barricade to reach the stage where he used the indigenous Mapuche language to initiate a victory speech to thousands of mostly young supporters.

"We are a generation that emerged in public life demanding our rights be respected as rights and not treated like consumer goods or a business," Boric said. "We know there continues to be justice for the rich, and justice for the poor, and we no longer will permit that the poor keep paying the price of Chile's inequality."

In his speech, the bearded, bespectacled president-elect highlighted

the progressive positions that launched his improbable campaign, including a promise to fight climate change by blocking a proposed mining project in the world's largest copper producing nation.

He also called for an end to Chile's private pension system — the hallmark of the neoliberal economic model imposed by Pinochet.

It's an ambitious agenda made more challenging by a gridlocked congress and ideological divisions recalling the ghosts of Chile's past that came to the fore during the bruising campaign.

Kast, who has a history of defending Chile's past military dictatorship, finished ahead of Boric by two percentage points in the first round of voting last month. But his attempt to portray his rival as a puppet of his Communist Party allies who would upend Latin America's most stable, advanced economy fell flat in the head-to-head runoff.

Still, in a model of democratic civility that broke from the polarizing rhetoric of the campaign, Kast immediately conceded defeat, tweeting a photo of himself on the phone congratulating his opponent on his "grand triumph." He then later traveled personally to Boric's campaign headquarters to meet with his rival.

And outgoing President Sebastian Pinera, a conservative billionaire, held a video conference with Boric to offer his government's full support during the three-month transition. That will

follow a runoff that saw 1.2 million more Chileans cast ballots than in the first round and raise turnout to nearly 56%, the highest since voting stopped being mandatory in 2012.

"It's impossible not to be impressed by the historic turnout, the willingness of Kast to concede and congratulate his opponent even before final results were in, and the generous words of President Pinera," said Cynthia Arnson, head of the Latin America program at the Wilson Center in Washington. "Chilean democracy won today, for sure."

In Santiago's subway, where a fare hike in 2019 triggered a wave of nationwide protests that exposed the shortcomings of Chile's free market model, young supporters of Boric waved flags emblazoned with the candidate's name while jumping and shouting as they headed downtown for his victory speech.

"This is a historic day," said Boris Soto, a teacher. "We've defeated not only fascism, and the right wing, but also fear."

Boric will become Chile's youngest modern president when he takes office in March and only the second millennial to lead in Latin America, after El Salvador's Nayib Bukele. Only one other head of state, Giacomo Simoncini of the city-state San Marino in Europe, is younger.

The new government is likely to be closely watched throughout Latin America, where Chile has long been a harbinger of regional trends. □



Chile's President elect Gabriel Boric, of the "I approve Dignity" coalition, celebrates his victory in the presidential run-off election in Santiago, Chile, Sunday, Dec. 19, 2021.

Associated Press

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Travellers' Choice 2020

Passenger flow control at check-in for US-bound passengers

ORANJESTAD - Aruba Airport Authority N.V. (AAA), the company that manages and operates Aeropuerto Internacional Reina Beatrix (AUA Airport) informs all US departing passengers that as of December 1, 2021 AUA Airport introduced "Passenger Flow Control" at the check in terminal for all passengers to the USA.

Based on agreements made by the Aruban Government with the US CBP in Washington recently, ongoing construction activities in the terminal building and also Covid restrictions, AUA Airport has created a staged approach to allow passengers to enter the check in facilities and the terminal for processing.

GROUP	YELLOW	BLUE	ORANGE
DEPARTURE TIME	Between 10:00 - 15:00	Between 15:00 - 17:00	Between 17:00 - 18:00
CHECK-IN	Before 14:00	Between 12:00 - 16:00	After 14:00

Note: For check-in times, please maintain this at **3 hours** prior scheduled departure time. Period December 1, 2021 – March 12, 2022. If flight is delayed, please maintain your scheduled departure time.

The Passenger Flow Control concept entails that passenger are allowed to enter the check in facilities based on separate groups (Yellow, Blue and Orange) established by the scheduled airline departure times. Passengers will thus receive a dedicated timeslot to enter the terminal as indicated in table below. This dedicated timeslot is determined for visitors

based on the information provided in the ED (Electronic Disembarkation) Card where information on the departure flight will also have to be submitted. Residents travelling out of Aruba to the US should take their scheduled departure time into account to determine at what time they are allowed to check-in (not earlier than 3 hours before that time of departure). The

Passenger Flow Control is introduced with the intention to prevent passengers arriving (too) early at AUA Airport for check-in. This will be in place for the winter season starting December 1, 2021, until March 12, 2022.

AUA Airport will have ambassadors at the entry doors to actively control

the time slots per passenger. Early passengers will have to wait outside for their correct time slot. With this Passenger Flow Control AUA Airport hopes to better manage the processing of passengers at the different check points inside the terminal areas and therefore also contribute to shorter lines and waiting times resulting in a much safer environment and better service levels for all passengers. AAA counts on the active participation and control of all stakeholders in this process to ensure that passengers are dropped off at the airport "in time" as per their assigned time slots for check-in of flights to the US. □

Delta Air Lines fortifies partnership with Aruba

ORANJESTAD — Delta resumes four-weekly Boston service to Aruba on December 19, in addition to daily flights from New York-JFK and Atlanta!

and arriving in Aruba at 12:05 p.m. Flight DL 1761 departing out of Aruba at 1:20 p.m. and arriving in Boston at 5:33 p.m.

New flights and increased service grows Delta's capacity to Aruba by 20% from pre-pandemic heights. In total, Delta will offer 18 weekly flights between three U.S. cities and Aruba this winter, the most they've operated to the country since launching flights in winter 1999. The Boston - Aruba service will operate four times a week (TUE|THU|SAT|SUN) with 160-seat Boeing 737-800 aircraft and the 180-seat Boeing 737-900 aircraft.

Jo-Anne Meaux Arends, Air Service Development Manager: "We are delighted to continue rebuilding our network, and secure direct service to and from prime markets".

Rene Maduro, Station Manager: "With the return of the service, our customers in Boston can once again take advantage of direct connections to the beautiful one happy island Aruba, as Boston's No. 1 global airline continues building up a premier hub and international gateway".

Delta's flights between Boston and Aruba will operate as follows:
Flight DL 1762 departing out of Boston at 6.25 a.m.

For a complete Delta Air Lines flight schedule go to <https://www.airportaruba.com/flight-schedules>. □

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Xixon Spanish Restaurant Now Open at Paseo Herencia

ORANJESTAD – Xixon has recently opened at Paseo Herencia in a cozy location next to ALDO. Xixon comes from Miami with over 20+ years of experience offering the best Spanish dishes including large variety of tapas and wines.

Their elaborative menu consists of 35 cold and hot tapas and over 1500 bottles of wines. For those who would like to try something different, try the Chef's Specialty of 'Pata de Pulpo con Espuma de Patatata a la Gallega' – Squid leg with Galician potato foam. Another Xixon specialty is the Spanish paella where one can choose between seafood, meat, vegetarian or mixed. Meat lovers can enjoy steak grilled on vol-



cano rocks and flake salt. For the seafood lovers, try the Bacalao, fish in white wine or the salmon with vegetables. There is a variety of dining options including vegetarian options and gluten-free dishes.

Xixon offers different food items,



great for the whole family. They are known for their top quality in food and service. The restaurant has been recognized as the "Best Spanish Restaurant by Miami NewTimes" in 2012 and 2018. It is an honor for Paseo Herencia to have Xixon as part of their restaurant listings.



Xixon dining areas both inside and outside overlooking the Paseo water show and is open every day from 5pm to 10pm. Reservations can be made at (297) 592 8998. □



ORANJESTAD — You are here for Christmas or New Year and we would like to portrait you! Send a Christmas and Happy New Year greeting to your loved ones, friends or colleagues back home.

Complete the sentence: Holiday Greeting from Merry Aruba to Send your picture with that text (including your name and where you are from) to: news@arubaday.com and we will publish this between December 22nd and 31st.

Isn't that a special way to show your loved ones that even though you are far apart you are still close at heart everyday.

Aruba to me..... Christmas Edition

Please do note: By submitting photos, text or any other materials, you give permission to The Aruba Today Newspaper, Caribbean Speed Printers and any of its affiliated companies to use said materials, as well as names, likeness, etc. for promotional purposes without compensation. Last but not least: check out our website, Instagram and Facebook page! Thank you for supporting our free newspaper, we strive to make you a happy reader every day again.

For today we received a holiday greeting from **Jennifer P Maduro from Montreal, Quebec, Canada**. Jennifer was born in Aruba and is the daughter of Audrey Maduro and grand daughter of Heler R Leon.

She wrote: **"Merry Christmas to my family and friends in my native Aruba. Se here the newly fallen snow almost as white as the sand on the beaches of Aruba where I spent much of my youth and vacations home"**.



Here is another holiday greeting from **Holden and Tenley Campbell** from New York, New York

They wrote: **"Holiday Greetings from Merry Aruba to all our friends at Nightingale and Collegiate Schools NYC"**.



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Article by Etnia Nativa

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Etnia Nativa is close to high rise Hotels



Ancient technics & Art

Episode CXXXV 135

NOORD — Our weekly column 'Island Insight' reveals and uncovers interesting information and amazing stories along the way. In this episode we are going to refer to ancient technics in art.

Our goal is to keep ancient techniques and methods alive and to incorporate cultural philosophies into this form of works that are using their own cultural accountability, a philosophical tenet that still allows their motive and ambition to be shown. Traditional crafts are perhaps the most tangible manifestation of the intangible cultural heritage of a people. Safeguarding must be aimed primarily at encouraging artisans to continue to manufacture their products and pass on their knowledge and skills to others, particularly within their communities.

There are numerous expressions within traditional crafts, from tools, clothing, accessories, containers, ritual objects, musical instruments, etc. Some of these expressions can become a legacy that is transmitted from generation to generation. The techniques required to create craft objects are as varied as the objects themselves and can range from delicate and painstaking work to rough chores such as making a sturdy basket or thick blanket.

Etnia Nativa persists in an ancestral technique teach-



ing how to work raw clay for example, in the native way as our ancestors did. It is a whole process that begins by guiding the participants to specific places where even the clay is preserved intact, thus they learn to identify the best raw material and to distinguish high-quality material from the rest of the earth. Once

this raw material is extracted, they are guided towards a work of purification of the dry material. Next, when adding water, the cleaning and detoxification begins to end in dehydration and have the raw clay in your hands.

As with other forms of intangible cultural heritage, globalization creates serious obstacles to the survival of traditional forms of crafts. Mass production often supplies the goods necessary for daily life at a lower cost of time and money than manual production. Also, environmental and climatic pressures influence traditional crafts and the deforestation of land diminishes the abundance of the main natural resources and supply. Even when handicraft becomes cottage industry, larger-scale production can cause harm to the environment. □



Did you say that you love Aruba its origins and cultural heritage? Than this private encounter with our columnist anthropologist is just as you. Sessions created in a gorgeous setting for visitor with special interests. Appointment is required. etnianativa03@gmail.com or Whatsapp us 297 592 2702 for a private reservation.

Why a 401(k)-to-IRA rollover could be a mistake

By **LIZ WESTON** of NerdWallet

If you leave a job or retire, you're often encouraged to roll over your 401(k) or other workplace retirement account into an individual retirement account. That might not be the right move.

Workplace plans have rules that can protect you from subpar investments and advisors who put their own interests ahead of yours. IRA investments can be more expensive, which can result in less money to spend in retirement. Workplace plans also may offer easier access to your money.

IRAs typically offer many more investment options, a fact heavily emphasized by the financial services companies that want your money. Rollovers are big business — the Investment Company Institute, a trade group, reports that households transferred \$463 billion from employer-sponsored plans to IRAs in 2017, the latest year for which statistics are available.

But just having more investment choices isn't necessarily better.

"With a 401(k), your options are typically going to be more limited, but your options are also going to be squarely within your best interest," says Dylan Bruce, financial services counsel for the Consumer Federation of America, a non-profit consumer advocacy group.

WHY THE FIDUCIARY STANDARD MATTERS

You usually have choices about what to do with your retirement funds when you

leave a job, and an IRA rollover is only one way to preserve the money's tax-deferred status. Other ways include leaving the account where it is (your former employer must allow this if your balance is over \$5,000) or rolling the money into a new employer's retirement plan, if that plan accepts such transfers.

Most workplace retirement plans are covered under the Employee Retirement Income Security Act, which imposes a fiduciary duty on the people and companies overseeing the plans. Fiduciaries are required to operate solely in the interests of the participants and avoid conflicts of interest.

In the past, advisors weren't held to the same standard when recommending IRA rollovers, although that's changing. The U.S. Department of Labor is extending fiduciary coverage to IRA rollovers, recognizing that financial services providers often have a strong economic incentive to recommend them even when they're not in an investor's best interest. Bruce calls that "a very good development," but it won't happen overnight. Enforcement of the new rules will be rolled out in stages starting next year, Bruce says.

WORKPLACE PLANS MAY COST LESS, OFFER MORE

IRAs are sometimes touted as being cheaper than 401(k)s on average, but often that's not the case. Since 2000, the cost of equity funds inside 401(k)s has dropped substantially, according to the Investment Company Institute. The



This undated file photo provided by NerdWallet shows Liz Weston, a columnist for personal finance website NerdWallet.com.

Associated Press

average expense ratio for stock mutual funds in the U.S. in 2020 was 1.16%, while 401(k) investors paid about one third that amount, or 0.39%, on average. Expense ratios are the annual fees charged for operating and administering the funds.

Fees make a big difference in how much your nest egg can grow. Let's say you invest \$20,000 in a fund with a 1.16% expense ratio that grows an aver-

age of 8% each year. After 40 years, you'd have about \$282,000. With a 0.39% fee, your balance would be nearly \$376,000, or one-third more.

Accessing your money can be harder with an IRA, as well. You can't borrow money from an IRA for longer than 60 days, or it's considered a taxable distribution. Any money you withdraw before age 59 1/2 is typically penalized as well as taxed, although the

penalty is waived for certain withdrawals, such as for higher education or a first-home purchase.

With 401(k)s, by contrast, you can begin withdrawing money at age 55 without penalties if you no longer work for the company offering the plan. If you transfer an old 401(k) account to a new employer's plan, you typically can borrow up to half of your total vested balance or \$50,000, whichever is less, and pay the money back over five years.

Furthermore, your 401(k) is also generally protected from creditors. Protection for IRAs varies based on state law.

WHEN A ROLLOVER MAKES SENSE

Many people don't want to leave money behind at their previous employer, and a rollover is a much better option than cashing out. A rollover also could be prudent if you don't have access to a low-cost 401(k), you want to consolidate multiple retirement accounts, your investment options are too limited or the advisor recommending the rollover is a fiduciary (and willing to put that in writing).

It's essential to investigate all your options, though, before deciding an IRA rollover is the right one. This is, after all, money you hope will sustain you for many years in retirement so it's important to choose wisely.

"It's probably going to be for most folks one of the most important financial decisions of their lives," Bruce says. □

YouTube TV restores access to Disney after dispute resolved

By **CATHY BUSSEWITZ**

NEW YORK (AP) — YouTube TV began restoring access to Disney content after a dispute between the companies led to an interruption of service over the weekend.

YouTube told viewers Sunday they were restoring service so customers could once again watch networks provided by Disney

such as ESPN, FX, National Geographic and local ABC stations.

During the outage, viewers lost access to all live Disney content including recordings they had saved to their libraries.

The outage stemmed from a breakdown in negotiations between YouTube and Disney over the contract between the com-

panies, which expired late Friday. YouTube had wanted Disney to charge the company the same rate to carry its content that it charged other TV providers of similar size. The companies reached agreement Sunday.

YouTube apologized for the disruption and said it would provide a \$15 credit to impacted customers. □



This Tuesday, Feb. 28, 2017, file photo shows the YouTube TV logo at the YouTube Space LA in Los Angeles.

Associated Press

CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS** 46 Signs of
1 Cupboard boredom
part 47 Breakfast
6 One of the bread
Obama daughters

- DOWN**
11 Western, 1 Planted
in slang 2 Locks
12 Fall flower 3 Sicilian
13 Crop volcano
planted 4 Rent out
late in the 5 Turn to ice

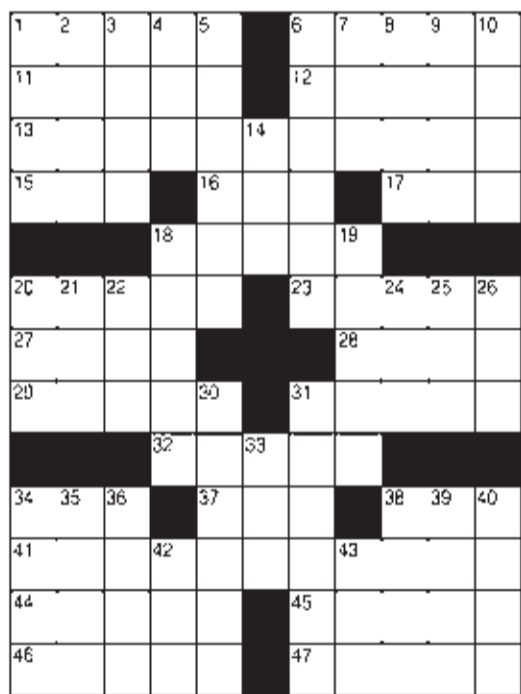
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Abbr. 10 News- poorly 39 Writer
18 Ancient paper Anita
Mexican section 25 Pen fill 40 Shoelace
20 Put a mouse's 26 Earl Grey, problem
stop to cousin e.g. 42 Light
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27 French region 31 Allow of self
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37 Simple
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38 Reindeer's
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41 Honeydew,
e.g.
44 Steer
clear of
45 Snow
house



Yesterday's answer

- 19 Fragrant 33 Black goo
wood 34 Traveling
20 Santa 35 Singing
suit star
21 Moody 36 Winter
music blanket
22 Feel 38 Singer
poorly Fitzgerald
24 Saloon 39 Writer
25 Pen fill Anita
26 Earl Grey, 40 Shoelace
e.g. problem
30 Marries 42 Light
again metal
31 Allow 43 Sense
of self



12-21

AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's. X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

12-21

CRYPTOQUOTE

XNSRLXZ LU BRTFW SRFS LU

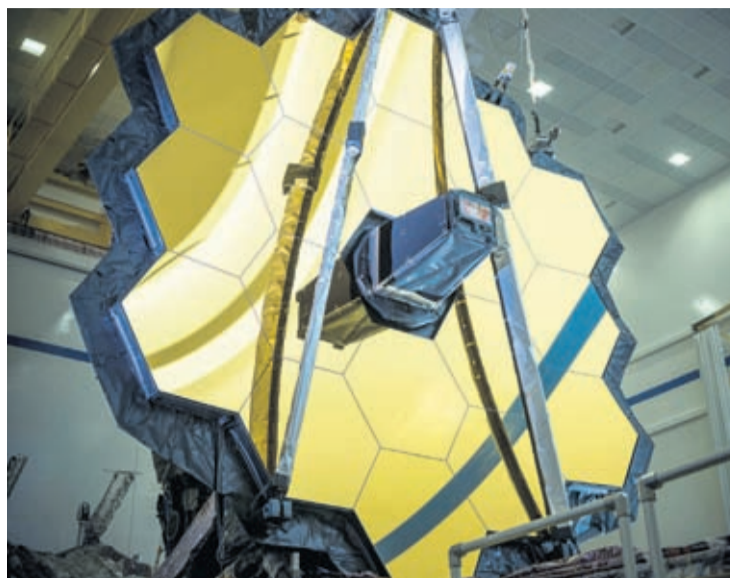
UJWTKMKJNJU, MNG DRFS NXT

VNTU XNS XTTV LU VTFG FS

F WTXHL — WKJSFGBR

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: I'M A MAN OF SIMPLE WANTS — ALL I WANT IS MY SHARE OF THE BEST THERE IS. WILLIAM FEATHER

Hubble telescope's bigger, more powerful successor to soar



This March 5, 2020 photo made available by NASA shows the main mirror assembly of the James Webb Space Telescope during testing at a Northrop Grumman facility in Redondo Beach, Calif.

Associated Press

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — The Hubble Space Telescope's successor is a time-traveling wonder capable of peering back to within a hair's breadth of the dawn of the universe. And it's finally on the brink of flight.

It will be the biggest and most powerful astronomical observatory ever to leave the planet, elaborate in its design and ambitious in its scope. At a budget-busting \$10 billion, it is the most expensive and also the trickiest, by far, to pull off.

Set to soar after years of delay on Friday, the James Webb Space Telescope will seek out the faint, twinkling light from the first stars and galaxies, providing a glimpse into cosmic creation. Its infrared eyes will also stare down black holes and hunt for alien worlds, scouring the atmospheres of planets for water and other possible hints of life.

"That's why it's worth taking risks. That's why it's worth the agony and the sleepless nights," NASA's science mission chief Thomas Zurbuchen said in an interview with The Associated Press. NASA Administrator Bill Nelson said he's more nervous now than when he launched on space shuttle Columbia in 1986.

"There are over 300 things, any one of which goes wrong, it is not a good day,"

Nelson told the AP. "So the whole thing has got to work perfectly."

The Webb telescope is so big that it had to be folded origami-style to fit into the nose cone of the European Ariane rocket for liftoff from the coast of French Guiana in South America. Its light-collecting mirror is the size of several parking spots and its sunshade the size of a tennis court. Everything needs to be unfolded once the spacecraft is speeding toward its perch 1 million miles (1.6 million kilometers) away.

"We've been waiting a long time for this," said the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's planet hunter Sara Seager. "Webb will move

our search for life forward, but to find signs of life we have to be incredibly lucky."

Named after the man who led NASA during the space-trailblazing 1960s, the 7-ton James Webb Space Telescope is 100 times more powerful than Hubble.

The 31-year-old Hubble — increasingly creaky but still churning out celestial glamour shots — focuses on visible and ultraviolet light, with just a smattering of infrared light.

As an infrared or heat-sensing telescope, Webb will see things Hubble can't, providing "an entirely new perspective on the universe that will be just as awe-inspiring," said Nikole Lewis, deputy director of Cornell University's Carl Sagan Institute.

Webb will attempt to look back in time 13.7 billion years, a mere 100 million years after the universe-forming Big Bang as the original stars were taking shape. Scientists are eager to see how closely, if at all, these initial galaxies resemble our modern day Milky Way.

To out hustle Hubble, Webb requires a considerably bigger mirror spanning 21 feet (6.5 meters). It also needs a canopy large enough to keep sunshine and even reflections from the Earth and moon off the mirror and science instruments. □

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Nitehawk Cinema puts its film-themed menus into new cookbook

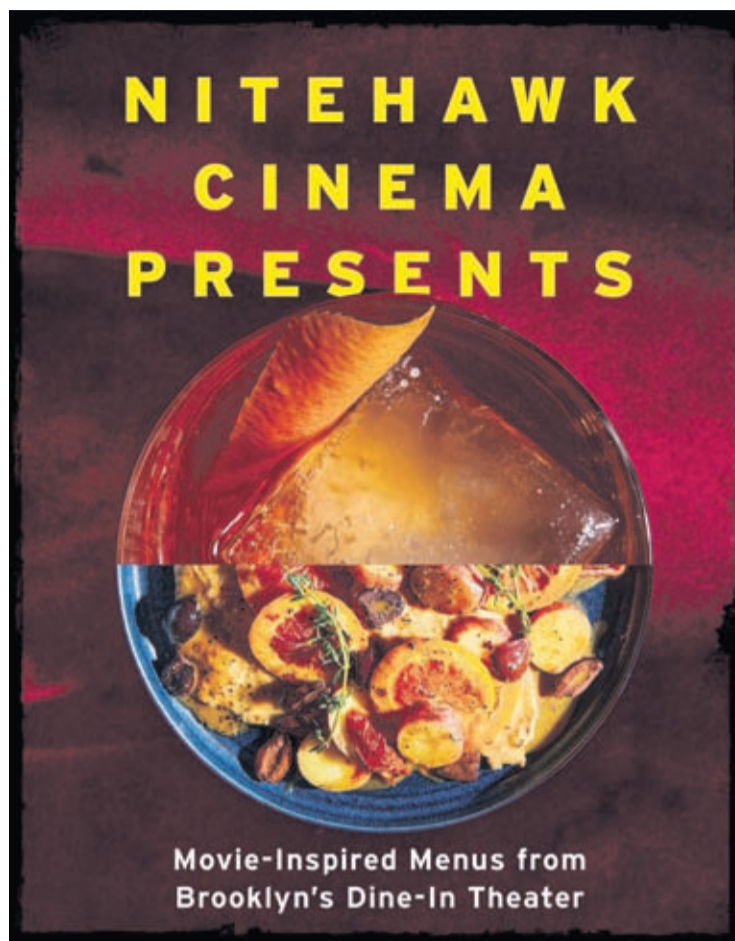
By **LEANNE ITALIE AP**
Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — More than a decade ago, Matthew Viragh was a Texan with a dream. He wanted to serve moviegoers booze and prepared food as they sat in their seats. In Brooklyn. But he had a state Prohibition-era liquor ban to contend with first.

Viragh, who left advertising for the theater business, hired an Albany lobbyist. The lobbyist rounded up some friendly lawmakers, and Nitehawk Cinema got its wish in 2011, becoming New York State's first legal dine-in theater. Then, Viragh began creating cocktail and food selections themed to the movies he was offering.

"It was a long shot," he told The Associated Press in a recent interview. "I didn't quite expect it to happen, so we were prepared to operate how we initially set it up, where we would have a restaurant and bar in the front area. It certainly has created opportunities for other theaters, too, in the city."

With two Brooklyn locations now and a loyal following, Viragh has extended his dream to a cookbook, "Nitehawk Cinema Presents," offering fan-favorite recipes and cocktails adapted for home. He and his team



This cover image released by Countryman Press shows "Nitehawk Cinema Presents: Movie-Inspired Menus from Brooklyn's Dine-In Theater."

Associated Press

of cinephiles, chefs and mixologists throw in bits of film history, too.

There's "The Dude Abides," a coffee-infused, vodka-and-egg-white concoction with stout, ancho chile, walnut and salted honey syrup, in homage to the White Russians that Jeff Bridges' character downed like Kool-Aid ("Jesus, you

mix a hell of a Caucasian, Jackie").

"Try the Veal, It's the Best in the City" contains veal, new potatoes, olives and sliced blood orange in honor of "The Godfather." In the classic film trilogy, oranges can be seen in scenes involving deeply meaningful death. The name of the veal dish is based on a line uttered

by the character Virgil Sollozzo before Al Pacino's Michael Corleone shoots him to death, though the Nitehawk book attributes the famous words to corrupt police Capt. Mark McCluskey. He, too, was executed in the restaurant scene.

The glossy cookbook is part schtick, like the cocktail "Red Rum," a mix of rum and hibiscus syrup for "The Shining" (for the uninitiated, "redrum" is murder spelled backward), and part literal movie reference, like the "Cup O' Pizza" from "The Jerk."

Viragh was inspired by Alamo Drafthouse, a dine-in theater chain with liquor and beer service and an increasing presence now in New York. It was founded in Austin, Texas, where the Fort Worth native went to college.

"After school, I moved up to New York to pursue some other things and always missed that sort of experience," he said. "There wasn't anything like that up here and I thought it would be a wonderful addition to the New York film and culinary scene."

To figure out how to do that, Viragh headed to Portsmouth, Virginia, and spent time at The Commodore Theatre, a restored Art Deco cinema with a fine dining restaurant in the

main auditorium.

"The owner, Fred Schoenfeld, was nice enough to take me in and let me spend the summer down there. He gave me room and board, and I basically learned all the ins and outs of running a dine-in theater," Viragh said. "I knew that I could do this."

Viragh lives in an apartment atop his original location in the Williamsburg neighborhood with his wife and two children. Combined, his theaters have 10 screens and 836 seats. He renovated a historic cinema for his second location, the old Sanders theater that opened in 1928 just off Prospect Park.

Viragh preserved touches from the past, including marble stairs hidden beneath carpeting.

Special feasts and themed dishes and drinks at Nitehawk come and go with the first-run, arthouse and classic films he shows, but a few menu items are permanent by popular demand. Some are included in the cookbook, like the "Leatherface Jerky" with Thai chili, garlic and soy sauce, an ode to "The Texas Chainsaw Massacre."

Viragh envisions his book used by home chefs for both movie-themed parties or quiet, romantic evenings of "Nitehawk and chill." □

LA film critics pick 'Drive My Car' as year's best



This image released by Janus Films and Sideshow shows Hiroyuki Nishijima, left, and Toko Miura in a scene from "Drive My Car."

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — It was a showdown between Ryu-

suke Hamaguchi's "Drive My Car" and Jane Campion's "

The Power of the Dog" for members of the Los Angeles Film Critics Association, but the group managed to give top honors to both on Saturday.

The Japanese film "Drive My Car" was named best picture and "The Power of the Dog," a Western drama set in 1925, got runner up. Campion, meanwhile, received best director with Hamaguchi as her runner up.

Simon Rex took best actor for his turn as an ex porn star in Sean Baker's "Red Rocket," and Penelope Cruz was named best actress for playing a photographer and new mother in

Pedro Almodóvar's "Parallel Mothers."

Supporting actress went to Ariana DeBose, who plays Anita in "West Side Story," while supporting actor was a tie between Vincent London for "Titane" and Kodi Smit-McPhee for "The Power of the Dog."

The nonfiction film "Flee," about an Afghan refugee, got best animated film, while the documentary award went to Questlove's "Summer of Soul," which chronicles a largely forgotten music festival in the summer of 1969.

"Our awards cover a lot of ground and genres and they also span the globe,"

said Claudia Puig, the president of the Los Angeles Film Critics Association. "We are thrilled to spread our love and appreciation for this breadth of outstanding films." The LA group isn't the first to single out "Drive My Car," about a widowed actor and director and the relationship he develops with his chauffeur, which debuted at the Cannes Film Festival earlier this year. The New York Film Critics Circle and the Boston Society of Film Critics awarded "Drive My Car" best picture honors as well. It also took best international feature at the Gotham Independent Film Awards. □

USA Basketball announces Kerr as next Olympic men's coach

By **TIM REYNOLDS**
AP Basketball Writer

Steve Kerr saw everything that Gregg Popovich went through as coach of the U.S. men's national team, saw exactly how difficult it was last summer for the Americans to emerge from the Tokyo Olympics with another gold medal. And when he walked off the floor for the last time in Tokyo, he was drained. "It wasn't easy," Kerr said. It was just further proof that the days of U.S. cakewalks to gold are over. He decided to take the job anyway. Kerr was formally announced as the next coach of the U.S. men's team on Monday in San Francisco, a not-very-well-kept secret in recent weeks that the Golden State coach would be taking over for Popovich and leading the Americans — if they qualify — into the 2023 Basketball World Cup and the 2024 Paris Olympics. Kerr's assistants will be Miami Heat coach Erik Spoelstra, Phoenix Suns coach Monty Williams and Gonzaga coach Mark Few. Williams has been an assistant before, under former U.S. coach Mike Krzyzewski. Spoelstra and Few were involved in coaching the U.S. select team, which was assembled to practice against the Olympic team, this past summer. "Coaching the USA men's



Golden State Warriors head coach Steve Kerr claps for this team during the first half of an NBA basketball game against the Boston Celtics, Friday, Dec. 17, 2021, in Boston.

Associated Press

national team comes with great responsibility — one that calls for a group effort with a team of coaches committed to the team, to the goal and to each other — and I couldn't ask for a finer group of high character individuals to help me lead our national team," Kerr said. "Our goal, of course, is to win and make our country proud. We will work hard to do so." Kerr would be the 16th different coach to take the U.S. men into an Olympics. Of the previous 15, 13 have emerged with gold. His hiring for the job represents

the first major decision by Grant Hill in his role as managing director of the men's national team, the position he's taking after Jerry Colangelo helped the Americans win the last four Olympic gold medals in that role. "I have been very, very blessed, very lucky, in my career," Kerr said at the news conference, a few minutes before Hill presented him with a USA Basketball jersey bearing the number "24" — a nod to the Paris Games. "And this opportunity is a result of being in the right place at the right time, working with the

right people, having a lot of people lift me up along the way." Kerr has three NBA titles as coach of the Warriors, won five more as a player, was part of the staff that won gold at the Tokyo Games and won a senior-level gold medal for USA Basketball as a player in the 1986 World Cup. "His basketball acumen, his ability to connect with people, I think his understanding and respect of the international game, along with some other factors, certainly played a role in this process," Hill said in

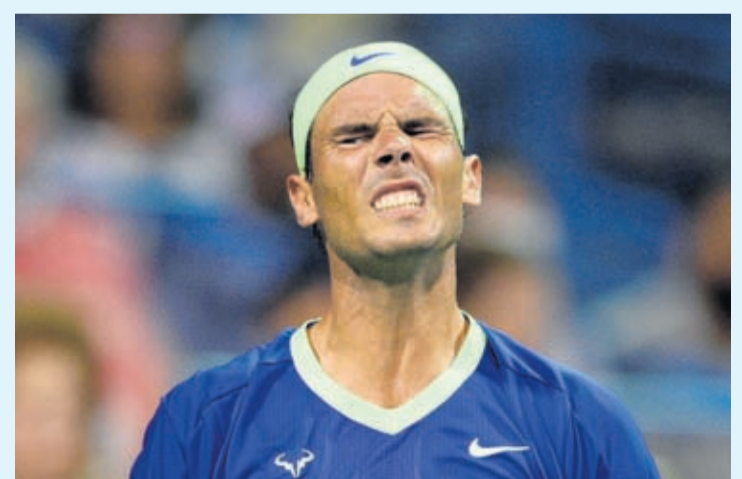
an interview with The Associated Press about the selection process. There are plenty of parallels between Popovich and Kerr, plenty of ties that bind. They are close friends, Kerr played for Popovich in San Antonio and both are taking the Olympic job after missing out on Olympic bids as players. Popovich tried to make the 1972 U.S. Olympic team; Kerr was a finalist for the 1988 Olympic team. "I just did whatever he told me," Popovich said with a smile earlier this month when discussing what it was like to have Kerr on his Olympic staff. The Americans currently are in the process of qualifying for the 2023 World Cup — which will end in the Philippines, the homeland of Spoelstra's mother. A strong finish at the World Cup would be the easiest way to qualify for the Paris Olympics; simply being the reigning gold medalist and world's No. 1-ranked program doesn't get the Americans into the Games by default. Hill said he and Kerr already have had conversations about how to approach the next 2-1/2 years in terms of building a roster, putting their own touches on the program and still maintaining the best of what has delivered results for the U.S. in the past. □

Nadal positive for virus after returning from Abu Dhabi

MADRID (AP) — Rafael Nadal tested positive for the coronavirus after playing in an exhibition tournament in Abu Dhabi, the Spaniard said Monday. Nadal wrote on Twitter that the positive result came from a PCR test he took after arriving in Spain. Nadal said he is enduring "unpleasant moments" but hopes to improve "little by little." He is in isolation at home and everyone who has been in contact with him was informed of his positive result. Among those possibly in contact with Nadal was Spain's former monarch,

Juan Carlos I, who has been living in the United Arab Emirates since allegations of financial scandals swirled and embarrassed the Spanish royal household last year. According to Spain's El Mundo newspaper, Nadal and Juan Carlos, who is 83, shared a meal on Saturday. The paper also published photos of both of them posing together without masks. Nadal said he had been tested every two days while away and all results had come back negative, with the last one on Saturday.

Nadal said that as a consequence of the positive result he will have to be flexible with his playing schedule. He said he will analyze his upcoming options depending on his condition. Nadal played his first match in more than four months on Friday, losing in straight sets to Andy Murray at the exhibition tournament in Abu Dhabi. The 20-time Grand Slam champion's chronic foot injury had forced him to sit out the final months of this season. Nadal had not competed since early August when he



In this Aug. 5, 2021 file photo, Rafael Nadal, of Spain, reacts during a match against Lloyd Harris, of South Africa, at the Citi Open tennis tournament, in Washington.

Associated Press

lost to Lloyd Harris in Washington. He missed Wimbledon, the Tokyo Olympics and the U.S. Open. □

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Blue Jackets, Canadiens shut down, 9 of 32 NHL teams paused

By **STEPHEN WHYNO**

More than a quarter of NHL teams have been shut down through at least the weekend after the Columbus Blue Jackets and Montreal Canadiens became the eighth and ninth to have activities paused because of several positive COVID-19 test results among players. The Blue Jackets had games set for Monday night at Buffalo and Thursday at home against the Sabres re-scheduled, and the NHL postponed the New Jersey Devils' game at the Pittsburgh Penguins set for Tuesday, bringing the total to 43



Buffalo Sabres defenseman Mark Pysyk (13) reacts after scoring a goal against the Minnesota Wild during the third period of an NHL hockey game Thursday, Dec. 16, 2021, in St. Paul, Minn.

Associated Press

across the league this season. The league said Columbus was shut down because of "concern with the number of positive cases within the last several days as well concern for continued COVID spread." Seven other NHL teams have been shut down as positive test results have risen across the league. The Detroit Red Wings and

Toronto Maple Leafs were added to that list Sunday, joining the Colorado Avalanche, Florida Panthers, Calgary Flames, Nashville Predators and Boston Bruins.

The Blue Jackets canceled their morning skate Monday while awaiting COVID-19 test results, a day after calling off practice because of virus concerns.

They could resume practice Sunday if cleared by the league and they are scheduled to face Toronto next Monday, though games involving teams on opposite sides of the U.S.-Canada border could continue to be postponed into next week.

The league and NHL Players' Association said Sunday the plan was to avoid a full league shutdown, pausing team activities on a case-by-case basis and postponing all cross-border games through Thursday. The Christmas break begins Friday and runs through Sunday, with games scheduled to resume next Monday.

"We will continue to play the 2021-22 regular season schedule," the NHL and NHLPA said Sunday in a joint statement. "Although there has been a recent increase in positive COVID test results among players, coaches and hockey staff,

there have been a low number of positive cases that have resulted in concerning symptoms or serious illness."

Roughly 10% of the league's players are in virus protocol. The spread of delta and omicron variants across North America has made Olympic participation unlikely.

Much about the omicron coronavirus variant remains unknown, including whether it causes more or less severe illness. Scientists say omicron spreads even easier than other coronavirus strains, including delta, and it is expected to become dominant in the U.S. by early next year. Early studies suggest the vaccinated will need a booster shot for the best chance at preventing an omicron infection but even without the extra dose, vaccination still should offer strong protection against severe illness and death. □

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